

“WE WERE WATCHING A MOVIE AT THE MOVIE THEATER.” COPS AND ROBBERS

LEVEL

High-Beginner to Advanced

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Grammar, speaking (primary focus); listening, writing (secondary focus)

GOALS

Students will use the past progressive tense to increase fluency using the past progressive while speaking. Students will take notes during the questioning and compare those notes with other groups at the end of the activity. Students will practice critical thinking and deduction skills to draw conclusions.

MATERIALS

- Teacher: whiteboard/chalkboard, markers or chalk, picture (Appendix 1), past progressive infographic (Appendix 2), a timing device.
- Students: pencils or pens, notebooks or writing paper.
- Infographic: Found in Appendix 1 with a higher quality version included at the end of the activity materials.

PREPARATION

1. Read through all the materials carefully.
2. Consider the number of students in your class and the best way to divide the students. This activity will require two groups. Group A will be the robbers and should be a small group. Group B will be the police and should be a larger group. Ideally, the robbers are $\frac{1}{4}$ of the class (for example, in a class of 12 students 3 are suspects and 9 are police officers). If you have a large class you may want to consider dividing the class into two large teams and from these teams make Groups A and B.
3. This activity will encourage students to be detailed oriented and ask specific questions. The goal of each group is to outwit the other group. Encourage the suspects to be specific in their alibi and encourage the police to ask very specific questions to the suspects.
4. During this activity students will role play the police and suspected robbers of a bank.
Vocabulary useful for this exercise are:
 - a. Suspect - a person thought to be guilty of a crime or offense.
 - b. Alibi - a claim or piece of evidence that proves one was elsewhere when an act, typically a criminal one, is alleged to have taken place.
 - c. To arrest – to seize by legal authority and take into custody.
 - d. Cop – an informal word for police officer. This word is used frequently in spoken English as is not considered impolite.
 - e. Robber – a person who takes property unlawfully from a place or another person by force or by threatening force.

PROCEDURES

1. Place the Past Progressive Infographic (Appendix 1) on the board. Point to the purple box on the infographic highlighting actions at specific times. Ask the students:
 - a. What were you doing at 6:00pm (18:00) last night?
 - i. In their answers stress the correct formation of the past progressive: was + verb(ing)
2. Ask the students a few more questions using the past progressive form. After a few questions of practice ask them:
 - a. Was anyone robbing a bank last night?
3. Place the pictures from Appendix 2 on the board and ask students what is happening in each of the pictures. Tell the students that today they are going to role-play as cops and robbers.
4. Divide the class into two groups. One group will be the police and one group will be the suspects in a robbery. Encourage students to volunteer to be the suspects and have them come to the front of the classroom.
5. Explain to the students that last night there was a bank robbery. Tell the students who volunteered to be robbers that they are suspects (the police believe they robbed the bank) in the crime. Ask them:
 - a. Do you want to get caught by the police?
6. Inform the suspects if they do not want to get caught they need to have a good alibi.
 - a. A good alibi should have a detailed account of what they were doing last night.
7. Have the suspects move to a corner of the room or, if possible, leave the classroom. Give them 5 to 10 minutes and as a group create an alibi, or story, about their activities last night. They want to convince the police that they were not involved in the crime.
8. While the suspects work on their alibi, have the police break into smaller groups. Ideally there is one group of police officers for each suspect (for example: if there are three suspects, then there should be three groups of police). Have the police write down questions to ask the suspects during their interview.
9. Have the suspects come back into the room and have one suspect go to a team of police. Have the police question the suspect. For example:
 - a. Police Officer: Where were all of you last night?
 - b. Suspect: We were watching a movie at the movie theater.
10. Have the police take notes on what the suspect says. After 5-7 minutes have the suspects rotate so that each is questioned by a new group of police officers. Encourage the police to ask more detailed questions to try and find holes (gaps in the logic of the story) in the suspect's alibi. For example:
 - a. Police Officer: What color shirt was Susan wearing?
 - b. Suspect: She was wearing a blue shirt.

When the police question the suspect Susan, they can ask questions to see if she gives the same answer. Encourage the police to underline or highlight answers the suspects give that are different.
11. After the police have questioned the suspects have the suspects come to the front of the room and give the police time to compare notes. Did the stories of the suspects match well? Police can determine if the stories match enough to suggest innocence. If the stories do not match they can place the suspects under arrest! Just be sure to tell the police to treat the suspects kindly – even criminals have rights!

PAST PROGRESSIVE

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also known as past continuous



Image: iStockphoto/Shutterstock

Interrupted Continuous Past Action

I was walking home when it started to rain.

I was watching a movie when she called.

Parallel Actions

I was studying while my brother was watching TV.

To Start a Story / Create an Atmosphere

While I was driving to work yesterday...

The sun was shining, and birds were singing...

was/were + verb-ing

Remember: usually STATIVE VERBS are NOT used in the progressive (-ing) form.

Repeated Action

often with "always"

They were always fighting.
She was always complaining about her job.

Action Before & After a Specific Time

Last night at 6 p.m., I was eating dinner.

In August, she was working at a summer camp.

Appendix 2: Cops and Robbers



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Image: ©alexmillos/Shutterstock

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